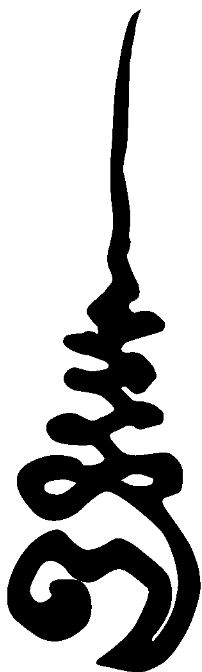
DHAMMAPADA





ARUNA

A DHAMMAPADA *for* Contemplation

Dedication

The Buddha

Let go of the past.
Let go of the future.
Let go of the present.
With a heart that is free
cross over to that shore
which is beyond suffering.

Dhammapada verse 348

This printing of
A Dhammapada for Contemplation
is offered in celebration
of the 25th anniversary of
Aruna Ratanagiri:
Harnham Buddhist Monastery.

1981 – 2006

Sponsorship

Donations from many people have contributed towards this printing of The Dhammapada. Below are dedications made by some of the contributors.

To the memory of
Mrs. M.E. Perera
by Dr. D.M. Makalanda

To the parents of
Justin and Pearl Pinnaduwa
and Mr. N.M. Pinnaduwa

With gratitude to
Simon Athukorala
and Tyronne de Alwis.
"for being part of my life.
May they attain Nibbana."
by Rupa de Alwis

A Dhammapada for Contemplation

A rendering by

Ajahn Munindo



ARUNA PUBLICATIONS

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Sabbadhanam dhammadanam jinati
'The gift of Dhamma surpasses all other gifts.'

Preface to First Edition

Travelling through the central Scottish Highlands one can catch an inspiring glimpse of that sacred mountain of Celtic culture, Schiehallion. This rocky beauty can be viewed from many perspectives, each one uplifting. A sight caught in a break between clouds gives hints of grandeur; enshrouded in mist it appears solid and timeless; against a clear blue sky it seems like a towering devotional monument pointing in the direction of heaven. Occasionally, one might see clearly the whole of it reflected in a lock or in a puddle left by the rain.

The collection of sayings called the Dhammapada is a glimpse of the timeless truth offered by the Buddha over two and a half millennia ago. Viewed from the East, West, North or South, for the first, second or hundredth time, each occasion of viewing these truths is uniquely rewarding.

It is my hope that the perspective offered here via *A Dhammapada for Contemplation* will delight those who come across it and serve to encourage still further viewings from different perspectives. I trust that what-

ever glimpses of truth may be gained, however briefly, encourage all travellers to continue faring on.

Any gratitude arising from the reading should be directed towards the earlier translators on whose work I have been wholly dependent: Daw Mya Tin and the editors of the Burmese Pitaka Association (1987), Ven. Narada Thera (B.M.S. 1978), and Ven. Ananda Maitreya Thera (Lotsawa 1988); also to the many friends whose contributions have added richness and depth to what would have otherwise been a crude sketch, especially Ajahn Thiradhammo, Sister Medhanandi, Bani Shorter and Thomas Jones.

Responsibility for any defects that may remain rest with me.

Bhikkhu Munindo
Aruna Ratanagiri Buddhist Monastery
Northumberland
UK
16th January 2000

Preface to Second Edition

Over five years have passed since we printed the first edition of this rendering of the Dhammapada. I am happy that that first publication was met with so much appreciation.

Now, on the occasion of celebrating 25 years since the establishment of Aruna Ratanagiri Monastery here on Harnham Hill, it is a joy to have an opportunity for a reprint. It has also been an opportunity to re-craft some of the verses. I am indebted to Bhikkhu Thanissaro for his new translation of the Dhammapada (Dhamma Dana Pubs. Barre MA. 1998) which was usefully consulted and am most grateful to all those who offered comment.

Bhikkhu Munindo
Aruna Ratanagiri Buddhist Monastery
Northumberland
UK
16th April 2006

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Introduction

The book you hold is a sparkling basket of light, full of illumination of the human situation. It is a version of the Buddhist classic, the Dhammapada; not a line-by-line translation but a free *rendering*, that aims to communicate the living spirit of the text, unencumbered by rigid adherence to formal exactness. The intention of the author, Ajahn Munindo, was to present a contemporary version of the text for readers to *use* in their investigation of the Way. Hence its title is *A Dhammapada for Contemplation*, indicating that the work is not to be considered as a definitive translation, but as an invitation to encounter and to contemplate the Buddha's wisdom.

It is a life of contemplation that is the context for this rendering. Ajahn Munindo, who was born in New Zealand, was ordained as a *bhikkhu* or monk of the Theravadin tradition in Thailand twenty-five years ago. He now resides in a small spiritual community in Northumberland, England, where he lives under a code of discipline going back

to the Buddha, which encourages simplicity and right attention. Transplanting this Buddhist monastic way of life from the Eastern countries, where Buddhism has been long established, into the West has meant a process of translation involving language, practices and rituals, such that the Theravadin tradition, along with others, is now established within the Western cultural ambience. *A Dhammapada for Contemplation,* therefore, although a free rendering by scholarly standards, aims to communicate a precise translation of values – the spiritual values of the living Buddhist tradition.

Thomas Jones Ph.D.
Cambridge, April 2000

A Dhammapada for Contemplation

Namo tassa
bhagavato arahato
samma sambuddhassa

Homage to the Blessed,
Noble and Perfectly Enlightened One.

The Pairs

1
All states of being are determined by mind.
It is mind that leads the way.
Just as the wheel of the oxcart follows
the hoof print of the animal that draws it,
so suffering will surely follow
when we speak or act impulsively
from an impure state of mind.

2
All states of being are determined by mind.
It is mind that leads the way.
As surely as our shadow never leaves us,
so well-being will follow
when we speak or act
with a pure state of mind.

3
When we hold fast to such thoughts as,
"They abused me, mistreated me,
molested me, robbed me,"
we keep hatred alive.

4
If we thoroughly release ourselves
from such thoughts as,
"They abused me, mistreated me,
molested me, robbed me,"
hatred is vanquished.

5
Never by hatred is hatred conquered,
but by readiness to love alone.
This is eternal law.

6
Those who are contentious
have forgotten that we all die;
for the wise, who reflect on this fact,
there are no quarrels.

7
As a stormy wind can uproot a frail tree
so one who holds heedlessly to pleasure,
who indulges in food and is indolent,
can be uprooted by Mara.

8
As a stormy wind
cannot move a mountain of rock
so one who contemplates
the reality of the body,
who develops faith and energy,
is unmoved by Mara.

9
Wearing the robe of a renunciate
does not in itself render one pure.
Those who wear it, and yet lack diligence,
are heedless.

10
Being possessed of self-restraint,
honest and diligent in conduct;
such a one is worthy
of the renunciate's robe.

11
Mistaking the false for the real
and the real for the false,
one suffers a life of falsity.

12
But, seeing the false as the false
and the real as the real,
one lives in the perfectly real.

13
Like rain leaking through
a poorly-thatched roof,
the unruly passions
seep into an untamed heart.

14
As rain cannot penetrate
a well-thatched roof,
so the passions
cannot enter a well-trained heart.

15
When we see clearly
our own lack of virtue
we are filled with grief;
here and hereafter we grieve.

16
When we appreciate fully
the benefit of our own pure deeds
we are filled with joy;
here and hereafter
there is a celebration of joy.

17
Here and hereafter
those who perform evil
create their own suffering.
Mental preoccupation
with the thought, "I have done wrong"
possesses their minds,
and they fall into chaos.

18
Here and hereafter
those who live their lives well
abide in happiness.
They are filled
with a natural appreciation of virtue,
and they dwell in delight.

19
Though one may know
much about Dhamma,
if one does not live accordingly –
like a cowherd
who covets another's cattle –
one experiences none of the benefits
of walking the Way.

20
Knowing only a little about Dhamma
but wholeheartedly according with it,
transforming the passions
of greed, hatred and delusion,
releasing all attachments
to here and hereafter,
one will indeed experience for oneself
the benefits of walking the Way.

Awareness

21
Appreciative awareness leads to life;
heedless avoidance is the path to death.
Those who are aware are fully alive,
while those who are heedless
are as if already dead.

22
The wise, being fully alive,
rejoice in appreciative awareness,
and abide delighting
in this capacity.

23
The Awakened Ones, firm in their resolve,
vigorously apply themselves,
and know freedom from bondage:
liberation, true security.

24
Those who are energetically
committed to the Way,
who are pure and considerate in effort,
composed and virtuous in conduct,
steadily increase in radiance.

25
By endeavour, vigilance,
restraint and self-control,
let the wise make islands of themselves
which no flood can overwhelm.

26
Those who are foolish and confused
betray themselves to heedlessness.
The wise treasure the awareness
they have cultivated
as their most precious possession.

27
"Do not become lost in negligence,
do not become lost in sensuality."
Heeding such council,
the contemplative discovers
profound release.

28
Those Awakened Ones,
who have tasted freedom
from all distraction
by cultivating awareness,
view all who are suffering
with compassionate perspective,
as one on a mountaintop
is able to view the plains.

29
Aware among those who are heedless,
awake among those who sleep,
the wise go forward
like strong young horses,
leaving the exhausted behind.

30
By way of diligent awareness
the god Magha won his realm.
Diligence is ever rewarded,
negligence is ever scorned.

31
The renunciate who delights in vigilance
and shuns heedlessness
advances like a grass fire,
consuming obstructions great and small.

32
The renunciate who delights in vigilance
and shuns heedlessness
is protected from regression:
such a one approaches liberation.

The Mind

33
Just as a fletcher shapes an arrow,
so the wise develop the mind,
so excitable, uncertain
and difficult to control.

34
Like a fish which on being dragged
from its home in the water
and tossed on dry land
will thrash about,
so will the heart tremble
when withdrawing from the current of Mara.

35
The active mind is difficult to tame,
flighty and wandering wherever it wills:
taming it is essential,
leading to the joy of well-being.

36
The protected and guarded mind
leads to ease of being.
Though subtle, elusive and hard to see,
one who is alert
should tend and watch over this mind.

37
Wandering far and wide on its own,
without form,
the mind lies in the heart-cavern within.
To bring it under control
is to be freed from the bonds of ignorance.

38
In one whose mind is unsteady,
whose heart is not prepared
with true teachings,
whose faith is not matured,
the fullness of wisdom is not yet manifest.

39
There is no fear
if the heart is uncontaminated
by the passions
and the mind is free from ill-will.
Seeing beyond good and evil
one is awake.

40
Seeing this body to be as fragile
as a clay vessel,
and fortifying the heart like a city wall,
one can confront Mara
with the weapon of insight.
Having the advantage of non-attachment,
one protects what has already been gained.

41
Certainly this body will soon lie lifeless:
cast aside on the ground,
devoid of consciousness
and as useless as a burnt-out log.

42
More than a thief,
more than an enemy,
a misdirected heart
brings one to harm.

43
Neither mother, father
nor any member of a family
can give you the blessings generated
by your own well-directed heart.

Flowers

44
Who is it
that can truly see as they are
this earth, this body,
the hell realms and the heavenly realms?
Who can discern
the well-taught Path of Wisdom,
in the way the eye of a skilled florist
can select perfect blooms?

45
It is those who knowingly walk the Way
who can see as they truly are
this earth, this body,
the hell realms and the heavenly realms.
These are the ones who can discern
the well-taught Path of Wisdom.

46
Know the body
to be as transient as foam, a mirage.
The flower of sensual passion
has a hidden barb.
See this and pass beyond death.

47
As a flash flood
can sweep away a sleeping village,
so death can destroy
those who only seek the flowers
of casual sensual pleasures.

48
To be frustrated and ungratified,
yet still only seek the flowers
of casual sensual pleasures
brings one under the destroyer's sway.

49
As a bee gathering nectar
does not harm or disturb
the colour and fragrance of the flower;
so do the wise move
through the world.

50
Dwell not on the faults
and shortcomings of others;
instead, seek clarity
about your own.

51
As a beautiful flower
without fragrance is disappointing,
so are wise words
without right action.

52
As a beautiful flower
with a delightful fragrance is pleasing,
so is wise and lovely speech
when matched with right action.

53
As many garlands can be made
from a heap of flowers,
so too, much that is wholesome can be done
during this human existence.

54
The fragrance of flowers or sandalwood
blows only with the prevailing wind,
but the fragrance of virtue
pervades all directions.

55
The fragrance of virtue
surpasses by far
the fragrance of flowers
or sandalwood.

56
The aroma of sandalwood
and the scent of flowers
bring only little delight
compared to the fragrance of virtue,
which suffuses even the heavenly realms.

57
It is not possible for Mara to find
those who abide in appreciative awareness
who, by perfect knowledge, are freed
and live in virtue.

58 - 59
Just as a sweet-smelling and beautiful lotus
can grow from a pile of discarded waste,
the radiance of a true disciple of the Buddha
outshines dark shadows cast by ignorance.

The Foolish

60
The night is long
for one who cannot sleep.
A journey is long for one who is tired.
Ignorant existence is long and tedious
for those unaware of Truth.

61
Having found no companion
who has travelled at least as far as ourselves,
it is better to go alone
than to accompany those
who remain irresolute.

62
"This is my child, this is my wealth":
such thoughts are the preoccupations of fools.
If we are unable to own even ourselves,
why make such claims?

63
The fool who knows he is a fool
is at least a little wise;
the fool who thinks that he is wise
is assuredly a fool.

64
Like spoons unable to taste
the flavour of the soup,
are the fools who cannot see truth,
even though they live
all their lives among the wise.

65
Like the tongue that can appreciate
the flavour of the soup,
is one who can discern clearly the truth
after only a brief
association with the wise.

66
By heedlessly performing evil,
the unwary fools
produce their own bitter fruits.
They behave like their worst enemy.

67
A deed is not well-done
when upon reflection remorse arises:
with tears of sorrow
one harvests its fruit.

68
A deed is well-done
when upon reflection no remorse arises:
with joy one harvests its fruits.

69
Fools perceive evil acts
to be sweet as honey
until they have seen the consequences.
When they behold their fruits,
fools suffer indeed.

70
Even after months of rigid asceticism,
subsisting on a frugal diet,
a fool is not to be compared in value
to the person who simply sees the truth.

71
Fresh milk does not immediately
turn into curd,
and evil acts do not immediately
show their fruits;
however, fools do suffer
from the consequences
of their foolishness
as they would be burned
by standing on coals hidden in ashes.

72
Fools are those who use foolishly
whatever gifts they have,
destroying their accumulated good fortune.

73 -74
The conceit and craving of fools grows
as they claim for themselves
undue authority, recognition and reward:
their falsity affects their longing,
they wish to be seen
as powerful and discerning.

75
The path that leads to worldly gain
and the path that leads to Liberation
are different paths.
Seeing thus, the renunciate disciple
avoids the distraction
of worldly gain and success,
to dwell in solitude.

The Wise

76
Only blessings can arise
from seeking the company
of wise and discerning persons,
who skilfully offer
both admonition and advice
as if guiding one to hidden treasure.

77
Let the wise guide beings
away from darkness,
give direction and advice.
They will be treasured by the virtuous
and dismissed by the foolish.

78
Do not seek the company
of misguided friends;
beware of degenerate companions.
Seek and enjoy the company
of well-guided friends,
those who support insight.

79
Surrendering oneself to Dhamma
leads to serene being.
The wise perpetually delight in the truth
taught by the Awakened One.

80
Those who build canals
channel the flow of water.
Arrowsmiths make arrows.
Woodworkers craft wood.
The wise tame themselves.

81
As solid rock
is unshaken by the wind,
so are those with wisdom undisturbed
whether by praise or blame.

82
On hearing true teachings,
the hearts of those who are receptive,
become serene –
like a lake, deep, clear and still.

83
Virtuous beings are unattached.
They do not indulge in heedless speech
about sensual pleasures.
They experience both joy and sorrow
but are possessed by neither.

84
Neither for one's own sake
nor on behalf of another
does a wise person do harm
– not for the sake of family, fortune or gain.
Such a one is rightly called
just, virtuous and wise.

85
Few are those who reach the beyond.
Most pace endlessly back and forth,
not daring to risk the journey.

86
Although it is difficult to cross over
the storm-swept sea of passion,
those who live in accord
with the well-taught Way
arrive at the beyond.

87 - 88
The wise abandon darkness
and cherish light,
leave petty security behind
and seek freedom from attachment.
To pursue such release is difficult and rare,
yet the wise will seek it,
detaching themselves from obstructions,
purifying heart and mind.

89
Freeing themselves from longing,
unhindered by habitual grasping,
those who align themselves with the Way
delight in non-attachment
and, while still in the world,
are radiant.

The Awakened One

90
There is no tension
for those who have completed their journey
and have become free
from the distress of bondage.

91
Alert to the needs of the journey,
those on the path of awareness,
like swans, glide on,
leaving behind their former resting places.

92
Just like birds that leave no tracks in the air,
there are those whose minds do not cling
to temptations that are offered to them.
Their focus is the signless state of liberation,
which to others is indiscernible.

93
There are those who are free
from all obstructions;
they do not worry about food,
their focus is
the signless state of liberation.
Like birds flying through the air,
trackless, they move on their way.

94
Like horses well-trained by their owners
are those who have rightly tamed their senses;
having freed their hearts
from pride and pollution
they generate all-pervading delight.

95
There are those who discover
they can leave behind confused reactions
and become patient as the earth;
unmoved by anger,
unshaken as a pillar,
unperturbed as a clear and quiet pool.

96
Those who arrive
at the state of perfect freedom
through right understanding
are unperturbed
in body, speech or mind.
They remain unshaken
by life's vicissitudes.

97
Those who know the uncreated,
who are free and stilled,
who have discarded all craving,
are the most worthy beings.

98
Whether in a forest,
a town or open country,
delightful is the dwelling place
of one now fully free.

99
Beings free from addiction
to sensual pleasures
know a unique form of delight.
They seek quiet in forest retreats
which worldly beings would avoid.

THE THOUSANDS

100
A single word of truth,
which calms the mind,
is better to hear than a thousand
irrelevant words.

101
A single verse of truth,
which calms the mind,
is better to hear than a thousand
irrelevant verses.

102
Reciting a single verse of truth
which calms the mind
is better than reciting
a hundred meaningless verses.

103
One might defeat alone in battle
a thousand thousand men,
but one who gains self-mastery
is by far the greater hero.

104 -105
Self-mastery is the supreme victory –
much more to be valued
than winning control over others.
It is a victory
that no other being whatsoever
can distort or take away.

106
To honour,
even for a single moment,
one who has attained self-mastery,
is of greater merit
than making countless offerings
to those who are unworthy.

107
To honour,
even for a single moment,
one who has attained self-mastery,
is of greater benefit
than habitually performing ceremonies
based on a wrong understanding.

108
Even if one should spend
an entire year
making gestures of offering
for the sake of self-gain,
all this is not worth one quarter the value
of offering veneration to a noble being.

109
For one who always honours and respects
those of greater years,
there are four blessings:
long life, beauty, happiness and strength.

110
A single day lived
with conscious intention and virtue
is of greater value than a hundred years
lived devoid of discipline
and right restraint.

111
A single day lived
with conscious intention and wisdom
is of greater value than a hundred years
lived devoid of discipline
and manifest wisdom.

112
A single day lived
with conscious intention
and profound effort
is of greater value than a hundred years
lived in lazy passivity.

113
A single day lived in awareness
of the transient nature of life
is of greater value than a hundred years
lived unaware of birth and death.

114
A single day lived awake to the undying state
is of greater value than a hundred years
lived without recognising deathlessness.

115
A single day lived awake to profound truth
is of greater value than a hundred years
lived unawakened.

EVIL

116
Hasten towards doing what is beautiful.
Restrain your mind from evil acts.
The mind that is slow to do good
can easily find pleasure in evil-doing.

117
If you perform an evil act,
then do not repeat it.
Avoid finding pleasure in its memory.
The aftermath of evil-doing is painful.

118
Having performed a wholesome act
it is good to repeat it.
Enjoy the pleasure of its memory.
The fruit of goodness is contentment.

119
Even those who perform evil
can experience well-being
so long as their actions
have not yet borne direct fruits.
However, when the results
of their actions ripen,
the painful consequences
cannot be avoided.

120
Even those who live wholesome lives
can experience suffering
so long as their acts
have not yet borne direct fruits.
However, when the fruits
of their actions ripen
the joyful consequences
cannot be avoided.

121
Do not ignore the effects of evil,
saying, “This will come to nothing.”
Just as by the gradual fall of raindrops
the water jar is filled,
so in time fools are corrupted
by evil-doing.

122
Do not ignore the effect of right action
saying, “This will come to nothing.”
Just as by the gradual fall of raindrops
the water jar is filled,
so in time the wise
become replete with good.

123
As one who is entrusted
with precious cargo
would remain vigilant and protective
avoid evil as if it were poison.

124
A hand without an open wound
can carry poison
and remain free from harm;
likewise, evil has no consequences
for those who do not perform it.

125
If you intentionally harm
an innocent person,
someone who is pure and blameless,
the harm will come back to you
like fine dust thrown into the wind.

126
Some are reborn as humans;
evil-doers are reborn in hell.
Doers of good are reborn in bliss
and the pure enter the trackless land.

127
There is no place on earth
where one can hide
from the consequences of evil actions –
not in a mountain cave,
the ocean nor in the sky.

128
There is no place on earth
beyond the reach of death –
not in a mountain cave,
the ocean nor in the sky.

Aggression

129
Having empathy for others
one sees that all beings are afraid
of punishment and death.
Knowing this,
one does not attack or cause attack.

130
Having empathy for others
one sees that all beings
love life and fear death.
Knowing this,
one does not attack or cause attack.

131
To harm living beings
who, like us, seek contentment,
is to bring harm to ourselves.

132
To avoid bringing harm to living beings
who, like us, seek contentment,
is to bring happiness to ourselves.

133
Avoid speaking harshly to others;
harsh speech prompts retaliation.
Those hurt by your words may hurt you back.

134
If spoken to harshly,
make yourself as silent as a cracked gong;
non-retaliation is a sign of freedom.

135
Just as a herdsman
drives cattle to pasture,
old age and death
direct living beings.

136
Though while they perform their evil acts
they do not realise what they are doing,
fools suffer the results
of their own actions accordingly,
just as one is burnt when handling fire.

137 -140
To cause harm to the defenceless
soon brings suffering
to those who attack.
They will reap pain or poverty or loss,
illness, insanity or persecution,
abuse, distress or devastation,
and, alone, after death
they must confront their misdeeds.

141
Neither outer asceticisms,
nor self-humiliation
nor physical deprivation of any kind,
can purify the heart
of one still obscured by doubt.

142
Flamboyant outer appearance
does not in itself constitute
an obstruction to freedom.
Having a heart at peace,
pure, contained,
awake and blameless,
distinguishes a renunciate,
a Wayfarer, a noble being.

143
A well-trained horse
gives no cause for restraint.
Rare are those beings who,
through modesty and discipline,
give no cause for rebuke.

144
Let the dread of endless mediocrity
spur you into great effort,
like a well-trained horse
encouraged by the mere touch of the whip.
Relinquish the burden of endless struggle
with unapologetic confidence,
with purity of action, effort, concentration,
and by conscious and disciplined
commitment to the path.

145
Those who build canals
channel the flow of water.
Arrowsmiths make arrows.
Woodworkers craft wood.
The good tame themselves.

Old Age

146
Why is there laughter?
Why is there joy
when the world is on fire?
Since you are clouded in darkness
should you not seek the light?

147
Gaze upon this once-decorated body –
it used to attract attention
but now it is only festering flesh,
a putrid thing.
It is neither sure nor substantial.

148
This body wears out with age;
it becomes a host to disease
– vulnerable, fragile,
a decrepit, disintegrating mass,
which eventually ends in death.

149
What pleasure does life hold
once one has seen
old bleached bones,
discarded and scattered round?

150
The physical body consists of bones
covered with flesh and blood.
Stored up inside it
are decay and death, pride and malice.

151
Passed down by the wise
is the knowledge that,
though what is externally impressive
loses its splendour,
and though our bodies will decay,
the truth itself outlasts all degeneration.

152
While ageing fools put on weight
like oxen in their stalls,
their minds remain small.

153 -154

For many lives I have wandered
looking for, but not finding,
the house-builder
who caused my suffering.
But now you are seen and
you shall build no more.
Your rafters are dislodged and
the ridge-pole is broken.
All craving is ended;
my heart is as one with the unmade.

155

Those who while still young
neither choose a life of renunciation
nor earn a good living,
end up like dejected old herons
beside a pond without fish.

156
Those who while still young
neither choose a life of renunciation
nor earn a good living,
will end up bemoaning the past,
falling like spent arrows
that have missed their mark.

The Self

157
If we hold ourselves dear,
then we maintain careful self-regard
both day and night.

158
It is wise
to set ourselves right
before instructing others.

159
One’s own self is the hardest to discipline.
You should act as you teach:
tame yourself
before trying to tame others.

160
Truly it is ourselves
that we depend upon;
how could we really
depend upon another?
When we reach the state
of self-reliance
we find a rare refuge.

161
As a diamond can cut through
the stone that once housed it,
so your own evil can grind you down.

162
Committed evil doers
behave toward themselves
like their own worst enemies.
They are like creepers
that strangle the trees
which support them.

163
It is easy to do that which is
of no real benefit to oneself,
but it is difficult indeed to do that
which is truly beneficial and good.

164
Like the bamboo
which destroys itself as it bears fruit,
so fools harm themselves
by holding to wrong views
and deriding those worthy ones
who live in harmony with the Way.

165
By ourselves we do evil
and by ourselves we are made impure.
By ourselves we avoid evil
and by ourselves we are made pure.
The great matter of purity
is our own affair.
No other can be responsible.

166
Knowing the Way for oneself,
walk it thoroughly.
Do not allow the needs of others,
however demanding,
to bring about distraction.

The World

167
By renouncing unworthy ways
and by not living carelessly,
by not holding to false views
we no longer perpetrate delusion.

168
Do not show false humility.
Stand firmly in relation to your goal.
Practice, well-observed,
leads to contentment
both now and in the future.

169
Live your life well in accord with the Way –
avoid a life of distraction.
A life well-lived leads to contentment,
both now and in the future.

170
The King of Death cannot find
those who look upon the world
as insubstantial,
as transient, a bubble –
illusive, only a mirage.

171
Come, view this world.
See it as an ornate, festive carriage.
See how fools are entranced by their visions,
yet, for the wise there is no attachment.

172
There are those who awaken
from heedlessness.
They bring light into the world
like the moon
emerging from clouds.

173
One who transforms old and heedless ways
into fresh and wholesome acts
brings light into the world
like the moon freed from clouds.

174
If birds are trapped in a net
only a few will ever escape.
In this world of illusion
only a few see their way to liberation.

175
White swans rise into the air.
Adept yogis
transport themselves through space.
Wise beings
transcend worldly delusion
by outwitting the hordes of Mara.

176
For one who transgresses
the law of truthfulness,
one who has no regard
for a future existence,
there is no manner of evil
that is impossible.

177
Those who fail to value generosity
do not reach the celestial realms.
But the wise rejoice in giving
and forever abide in bliss.

178
Better than ruling the whole world,
better than going to heaven,
better than lordship over the universe,
is an irreversible commitment to the Way.

The Buddha

179
The Buddha's perfection is complete;
there is no more work to be done.
No measure is there for his wisdom;
no limits are there to be found.
In what way could he be distracted
from truth?

180
The Buddha's perfection is complete;
in him there is no craving
that could drag him down.
No measure is there for his wisdom;
no limits are there to be found.
In what way could he be distracted
from truth?

181
Celestial beings treasure
the Awakened Ones
who have fully seen the Way,
who are devoted to meditation
and delight in the peace of renunciation.

182
It is not easy to be born
as a human being
and to live this mortal life.
It is not easy to discern
profound wisdom
and most rare
for a Buddha to arise.

183
Cease to do evil,
cultivate that which is good;
purify the heart.
This is the Way
of the Awakened Ones.

184
A renunciate does not
oppress anyone.
Patient endurance
is the ultimate asceticism.
Profound liberation,
say the Buddhas,
is the supreme goal.

185
Not insulting, not harming,
cultivating restraint
with respect for the training,
modesty in eating and contentment
with one's dwelling place,
devotion to mindful intent:
this is the Teaching of the Buddha.

186 -187
Not in great wealth
is there contentment,
nor in sensual pleasure,
gross or refined.
But in the extinction of craving
is joy to be found
by a disciple of the Buddha.

188 -189
To many places beings withdraw
to escape from fear:
to mountains, forests,
parklands and gardens;
sacred places as well.
But none of these places
offer true refuge,
none of them can free us from fear.

190 -191
One who finds refuge in the Buddha
in the Dhamma and in the Sangha
sees with penetrating insight:
suffering, its cause, its release
and the Way leading to true freedom.

192
The Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha:
these are true refuge;
these are supreme;
these lead to Liberation.

193
It is hard to find
a being of great wisdom;
rare are the places
in which they are born.
Those who accompany them
when they appear
know good fortune indeed.

194
Blessed is the arising of a Buddha;
blessed is the revealing of the Dhamma;
blessed is the concord of the Sangha;
delightful is harmonious communion.

195 -196
Immeasurable is the benefit
obtained from honouring those
who are pure and beyond fear.
Beings who have found freedom
from sorrow and grieving
are worthy of honour.

Happiness

197
While in the midst
of those who hate,
to dwell free from hating
is happiness indeed.

198
While in the midst
of those who are troubled,
to dwell untroubled
is happiness indeed.

199
While in the midst
of those who are greedy,
to dwell free from greed
is happiness indeed.

200
We dwell happily,
free from anxiety;
like radiant beings
in celestial realms
we rejoice in delight.

201
Victory leads to hatred,
for the defeated suffer.
The peaceful live happily,
beyond victory and defeat.

202
There is no fire like lust,
no distress like hatred,
no pain like the burden of attachment,
no joy like the peace of liberation.

203
Hunger is the greatest affliction,
conditionality the greatest
source of despair.
The wise, seeing this as it is,
realise liberation, the greatest joy.

204
A healthy mind is the greatest gain.
Contentment is the greatest wealth.
A trustworthy friend is the best of kin.
Unconditional freedom
is the highest bliss.

205
Tasting the flavour of solitude
and the nectar of peace,
those who drink the joy
that is the essence of reality
abide free from fear of evil.

206
It is always a pleasure
not to have to encounter fools.
It is always good to see noble beings
and a delight to live with them.

207
Tedious is the company of fools,
always painful, like being
surrounded by enemies;
but to associate with the wise
is like being at home.

208
You should follow the ways
of those who are steadfast,
discerning, pure and aware,
just as the moon follows
the path of the stars.

Affection

209
There are those who pursue
that which should be avoided
and avoid that which
should be pursued.
Caught up in the senses
they lose their way
and later envy
those who know the truth.

210
To lose the company of those
with whom one feels at home
is painful,
to be associated with those
whom you dislike
is even worse;
so do not abandon yourselves
either to the company of those
with whom you feel at home
or those whom you dislike.

211
Beware of the attachment
that springs from fondness,
for separation from those
one holds dear is painful,
while if you take sides
neither for nor against fondness,
there will be no bondage.

212
From endearment springs grief.
From endearment springs fear of loss.
Yet, if one is free from endearment,
there is no grief
so how could there be fear?

213
Becoming lost in affection
brings sorrow;
becoming lost in affection
brings fear.
Being free from affection
means sorrow ceases,
so how could there be any fear?

214
Becoming lost in enjoyment
brings sorrow;
becoming lost in enjoyment
brings fear.
Being free in your experience of enjoyment
means sorrow ceases,
so how could there be any fear?

215
Becoming lost in lust
brings sorrow;
becoming lost in lust
brings fear.
Not being lost in lust
means sorrow ceases,
so how could there be any fear?

216
Becoming lost in craving
brings sorrow;
becoming lost in craving
brings fear.
Being free from craving
means sorrow ceases,
so how could there be any fear?

217
Naturally loved are those
who live with right action
and have found the Way,
and through insight
have become established in the truth.

218
Those who long
for the undefinable,
with hearts filled with inspiration,
whose minds are freed
from sensual longing
are called
“those bound for freedom”.

219 -220
Just as family and friends
joyfully welcome home
loved ones returned from afar,
so their own good deeds
welcome those that have done them
as they go from this life to the next.

Anger

221
Relinquish anger.
Let go of conceit.
Release yourself
from all that binds you.
The pure-hearted who cling
neither to body or mind
do not fall prey to suffering.

222
I say, those who contain their anger
as a charioteer controls
a speeding chariot,
are fully in charge of their lives;
others are merely keeping
their hands on the reins.

223
Transform anger with kindness
and evil with good,
meanness with generosity
and deceit with integrity.

224
These three ways
lead to the heavens:
asserting the truth,
not yielding to anger,
and giving, even if you have
only a little to share.

225
Awakened Ones do not cause harm.
They are rightly restrained
and they move to changelessness
where they grieve no more.

226
All pollution is cleared
from the minds of those
who are always vigilant,
training themselves day and night
and whose lives are fully intent
upon liberation.

227
Since ancient times it has been the case
that those who speak too much
are criticised,
as are those who speak too little
and those who don't speak at all.
Everyone in this world is criticised.

228
There never was
nor will there be
nor is there now anybody
who is only blamed
or wholly praised.

229
Those who live impeccably,
who are discerning,
intelligent and virtuous –
they are continually praised by the wise.

230
Who would cast blame on those
who in their being are like gold?
Even the gods appreciate their lustre.

231
Beware of clumsy movement
and aware in your bodily conduct.
Renounce all devious action
and cultivate that which is wholesome.

232
Beware of contrived utterance
and aware in all that you say.
Renounce all cunning speech
and cultivate that which is wholesome.

233
Beware of devious thinking
and aware of all that you dwell upon.
Renounce all unruly thought
and cultivate that which is wholesome.

234
Ably self-restrained
are the wise,
in action, in thought
and in speech.

Pollution

235
Resembling a withered leaf,
you have the messenger
of death at your side.
Although a long journey lies ahead,
you have still made no provision.

236
Hasten to cultivate wisdom.
Make an island for yourself.
Freed from stain and defilement,
you will enter noble being.

237
It is time for you to come
into the presence of the Lord of Death.
There is no time for rest on this journey,
yet what provision have you made?

238
Hasten to cultivate wisdom;
make an island for yourself.
Freed from stain and defilement
you are released
from birth and death.

239
Gradually, gradually,
a moment at a time,
the wise remove their own impurities
as a goldsmith removes the dross.

240
As iron is destroyed by the rust it produces,
so those who perform evil are corroded
by their own action.

241
Lack of study leads
to forgetting the teachings;
neglect spoils the home;
laziness leads to loss of beauty;
heedlessness ruins attention.

242
Sexual misconduct
diminishes those who perform it,
stinginess diminishes
those who could give.
Acts that diminish their doer
are stains indeed.

243
But the worst stain of all
is ignorance.
Be purified of this
and you are free.

244
Life is apparently easy
for one who lacks shame,
who is as impudent as a crow,
who is arrogant, aggressive,
invasive and corrupt.

245
Life is not easy for those
who have a sense of shame,
who are modest,
pure-minded and detached,
morally upright and reflective.

246 -247
Whoever destroys life,
disregards truth,
is sexually irresponsible,
takes what is not rightfully theirs,
and heedlessly indulges in drugs,
destroys the very roots
of their own life.

248
Whoever is intent on goodness
should know this:
a lack of self-restraint is disastrous.
Do not allow greed and misconduct
to prolong your misery.

249 -250
People are inspired to be generous
according to their faith and trust.
If we become discontented
with what we have been given
our meditation will be filled
with endless mental affliction;
but if we are free from this discontent,
our meditation is full of peace.

251
There is no fire like lust,
no obstruction like hatred,
no trap like delusion,
and no vortex like craving.

252
It is easy to see the faults of others,
but it takes courage to look at one's own.
As with chaff,
one might winnow others' shortcomings
while hiding one's own,
as a stealthy hunter
might conceal himself from his prey.

253
Those who always look for
the faults of others –
their corruptions increase
and they are far from freedom.

254
No tracks are found in the air,
there is no liberation apart from the Way.
Most people tend to indulge in proliferation,
from which Awakened Ones are free.

255
No tracks are found in the air,
there is no liberation apart from the Way.
There are no conditioned things
that are permanent
and yet the Buddhas remain unperturbed.

The Just

256
Making an arbitrary decision
does not amount to justice.
Having considered arguments
for and against,
the wise decide the case.

257
By making decisions
based on truth and fairness
one safeguards the law
and is called righteous.

258
Those who speak much
are not necessarily possessed of wisdom.
The wise can be seen
to be at peace with life
and free from all enmity and fear.

259
Though one's knowledge
may be limited,
if understanding and conduct
rightly accord with the Way
one is to be considered
well-versed in Dhamma.

260
Having grey hair
does not make you an elder;
ripe in years maybe,
but perhaps pointlessly so.

261
One who is truthful,
virtuous, impeccable in conduct,
free from all stains and wise
can be called an elder.

262 -263
Those who are envious,
stingy and manipulative
remain unappealing despite
good looks and eloquent speech.
But those who have freed themselves
from their faults
and arrived at wisdom
are attractive indeed.

264
Shaving your head
does not make you a renunciate,
if you are still full of
recklessness and deceit.
How could someone possessed
by craving and lust
be considered a renunciate?

265
You become a monk or nun
by letting go of all evil,
by renouncing all
unwholesomeness,
both great and small.

266
You are not a monk or nun
because you depend
on others for food,
but by submitting yourself
wholeheartedly
to the training of body,
speech and mind.

267
You become a monk or nun
by seeing through this world
with understanding,
by rising above good and bad
and living a life of purity
and contemplation.

268 -269

Silence does not denote profundity
if you are ignorant and untrained.
Like one holding scales,
a sage weighs things up,
wholesome and unwholesome,
and comes to know
both the inner and outer worlds.
Therefore the sage is called wise.

270

Those who still cause harm
to living beings
cannot be considered as attained.
Those who are attained
maintain a harmless demeanour
toward all beings.

271 - 272
Do not rest contented
because you keep all the rules
and regulations,
nor because you achieve great learning.
Do not feel satisfied because you
attain meditative absorption,
nor because you can dwell in
the bliss of solitude.
Only when you arrive
at the complete eradication
of all ignorance and conceit
should you be content.

The Path

273
The eight-fold path
is the most honourable way,
the four noble truths
the most honourable utterance,
freedom from craving
the most honourable state,
and the all-seeing Buddha
the most honourable being.

274
This is the only Way;
there is no other
that leads to clear seeing.
Follow this Way
and Mara becomes disoriented.

275
If you walk the path
you will arrive at the end of suffering.
Having beheld this myself,
I proclaim the Way
which removes all thorns.

276
The Awakened Ones
can but point the way;
we must make the effort ourselves.
Those who reflect wisely
and enter the path are freed
from the fetters of Mara.

277
"All conditioned things
are impermanent";
when we see this with insight
we will tire of this life of suffering.
This is the Way to purification.

278
"All conditioned things
are inherently lacking";
when we see this with insight
we will tire of this life of suffering.
This is the Way to purification.

279
"All realities are devoid
of an abiding self";
when we see this with insight
we will tire of this life of suffering.
This is the Way to purification.

280
If, while still young and strong,
you procrastinate
when you should act,
indulging in heedless fantasies,
the Way and its wisdom
will never become clear.

281
Be careful in what you say,
restrained in what you think,
and impeccable in how you act.
Purifying these three ways of behaviour
will take you along the Way of the sages.

282
To contemplate life leads to wisdom;
without contemplation wisdom wanes.
Recognise how wisdom
is cultivated and destroyed,
and walk the Way of increase.

283
Clear away the forests of craving
but do not attack and destroy the trees.
Clear the entire forest of craving
and you will see the Way to freedom.

284
So long as sexual attraction
has not been cleared away –
if the even the slightest trace remains,
the heart is held in dependence
like a suckling calf to a cow.

285
Remove the bonds of affection
as one might pluck an autumn flower.
Walk the Way that leads to liberation
explained by the Awakened One.

286
It is a fool
who indulges in dreaming
about the most comfortable
place to live, saying
"here it will be warm,
there it will be cool" –
unaware of impending death.

287
As a flood could sweep away
an entire village,
those who are caught up
in relationships and possessions
will be carried away by death.

288 - 289
As you approach death
none of your fond attachments
will protect you.
See this, then with wise restraint
and unwavering effort,
hasten to clear your path to liberation.

Various

290
It is wisdom
that enables letting go
of a lesser happiness
in pursuit of a happiness
which is greater.

291
You fail
in the pursuit of happiness
if it is at the expense
of others' well-being.
The snare of ill-will
can still entangle you.

292
To leave undone
that which should be done
and to do that
which should be avoided
leads to carelessness and conceit.
It will increase confusion.

293
Confusion ceases
by maintaining
a meditation practice
focused in the body,
by avoiding that
which should not be done
and by mindfully doing
that which should be done.

294
By removing craving and conceit,
eradicating wrong views,
and by overcoming
the deluded attachments of the sense realm,
the noble being freely moves on.

295
Having cleared
all the hindrances to the Path –
greed, rage, dullness and laziness,
worry, anxiety and doubt –
the noble being freely moves on.

296
Disciples of the Buddha
are fully awake
dwelling both day and night
in contemplation of the Awakened One.

297
Disciples of the Buddha
are fully awake
dwelling both day and night
in contemplation of reality.

298
Disciples of the Buddha
are fully awake
dwelling both day and night
in contemplation of the communion
of beings who have awakened.

299
Disciples of the Buddha
are fully awake
dwelling both day and night
in contemplation of
the true nature of the body.

300
Disciples of the Buddha
are fully awake
both day and night
taking delight in compassion.

301
Disciples of the Buddha
are fully awake
both day and night
taking delight
in cultivating the heart.

302
It is hard to live
the life of renunciation;
its challenges
are difficult to find pleasant.
Yet it is also hard to live
the householder's life;
there is pain
when associating with those
among whom one feels no companionship.
To wander uncommitted
is always going to be difficult;
why not renounce
the deluded pursuit of pain?

303
A traveller possessed of virtue,
disciplined and committed to right conduct,
will be received with honour;
such a one can be recognised
and can travel with confidence.

304
The good
are seen even from afar.
They shine like the distant
Himalayan peaks.
The untrained simply disappear
like arrows shot into the dark.

305
With enthusiasm establish yourself
in solitary practice –
sit alone, sleep alone, walk alone
and delight as if secluded in the forest.

Hell

306
Lying leads to sorrow.
Concealing wrong actions
leads to sorrow.
These two acts of deceit
take beings
to the same state of woe.

307
Those who wear
the robes of a renunciate
yet harbour evil
and are unrestrained
go to a sorrowful state.

308
It would be better to swallow molten iron
than for a renunciate
to live on offerings
deceitfully gained.

309
Accumulated sadness,
troubled sleep,
blame and remorse
are an adulterer's lot.

310
Brief is the delight
of the fearful, adulterous couple,
for only painful consequences can follow.

311
As *kusa* grass wrongly grasped
wounds the hand that holds it,
so the renunciate life
hurts those who train in it wrongly.

312
Acts carelessly done,
practices corruptly performed,
the holy life lived perversely,
lead to little or no benefit at all.

313
If anything is to be done,
do it well,
with energy and devotion;
the renunciate life led heedlessly
just stirs up the dust.

314
Hurtful deeds
are better left undone
as they always lead to remorse.
Harmless deeds are better done
as no regret will follow.

315
As a border city must be carefully protected
so guard yourself both within and without;
build your defences wisely and in time.
If these things are not attended to
at the right moment
great sadness will come.

316
Distorted views
which create feelings of shame
about that which is not shameful,
or indifference
to that which is shameful,
can cause beings to descend into hell.

317
Distorted views
which create feelings of fear
toward what is not actually threatening,
or indifference in the face
of that which is threatening,
can cause beings to descend into hell.

318
Distorted views,
which give rise to seeing right as wrong
and wrong as right,
are the cause for beings to disintegrate.

319
The clear seeing which knows
that which is flawed as flawed
and that which is pure as pure
can lead beings to transcend misery.

The Elephant

320
Like an elephant in battle
withstands arrows,
I choose to endure
verbal attacks from others.

321
Well-trained horses
can be trusted in crowds,
and are to be mounted by kings.
Individuals who have trained
themselves to withstand abuse
will be valuable everywhere.

322
Impressive are horses or elephants
which have been well-trained;
but more impressive
are individuals
who have tamed themselves.

323
It is not on a well-trained animal
that you can ride
to the land of liberation;
it is only on the vehicle
of a well-trained self
that you will arrive there.

324
A wild elephant
when captured and bound and in rut
is restless, uncontrollable,
not eating its food.
It longs for its native forest home.

325
It is a fool that overeats
and indulges in laziness,
then, feeling drowsy,
wallows in sleep like an oversized pig;
this forebodes continued suffering.

326
My mind which was once
wild and unruly,
wandering as it wished,
I hold now in check,
as the mahout with his hook
controls an elephant in rut.

327
As an elephant
resolutely drags itself from a swamp
uplift yourself with the inspiration
of cultivated attention.

328
If you find a good companion,
of integrity and wisdom,
you will overcome all dangers
in joyous and caring company.

329
But if you cannot find
a good companion
of integrity and wisdom,
then, like a king departing
a conquered land,
or an elephant wandering
alone in the forest,
walk alone.

330
A harmless solitary life
lived at ease
like that of the lone elephant in the forest,
is better than
the unnecessary company of fools.

331
Pleasure arises from
the timely company of friends.
Pleasure arises from
having few needs.
Pleasure arises from
accumulated virtue at life's end.
Pleasure arises from
seeing beyond suffering.

332
Pleasure arises from
rightly serving one's parents.
Pleasure arises from
supporting renunciates.
Pleasure arises from
honouring awakened beings.

333
Pleasure arises from
sustaining virtue into old age.
Pleasure arises from
sustaining sound faith.
Pleasure arises with insight.
Pleasure arises from
renouncing evil.

Craving

334
Uncontained craving
grows like a creeper in the forest.
Being lost in it
one leaps around
like a tree-dwelling ape looking for fruit.

335
Fostering habits
such as craving and clinging
is like fertilising noxious weeds.

336
As water falls from a lotus leaf
so sorrow drops from those
who are free of toxic craving.

337
Torrential rains can destroy crops.
Mara can destroy you.
Thus I implore you –
dig up the roots of all craving.
I give you my blessing
for this work.

338
If the roots are not removed
weeds grow again and again;
suffering returns to us
so long as craving remains.

339
When the streams
of sensual pleasure run strong
they can generate
a torrent of longing.

340
The streams of craving flow everywhere.
The wild creeper of craving
spreads and entangles.
Discerning this creeper with insight,
dig it out.

341
Beings naturally experience pleasure;
but when pleasure is contaminated
with craving,
not releasing it creates frustration
and tedious suffering follows.

342
Trapped in habits of craving
people panic
like rabbits caught in the snare.
Their reactions reinforce the pain
of their entrapment.

343
Trapped in habits of craving
people panic
like rabbits caught in the snare.
If you wish to be free from entrapment,
craving itself must be removed.

344
There are those who have begun
on the path to freedom
yet return, out of desire, to bondage.

345 - 346
Wisdom sees
that being held behind bars
or bound by chains
is less limiting
than infatuation with possessions
and obsession with relationships.
These bonds, though not so obvious,
are strong and hold us down.
To renounce attachment
to the world of the senses
is to be free from the prison of craving.

347
Like a spider caught in its own web,
a being enwrapped in sensual craving
must be released from its own longings
before it can walk free.

348
Let go of the past.
Let go of the future.
Let go of the present.
With a heart that is free
cross over to that shore
which is beyond suffering.

349
The bonds
of deluded habits and craving
are strengthened
by one who lets the mind heedlessly dwell
on objects of desire.

350
But one who delights
in calming sensual thoughts,
who is alert
and cultivates awareness
of the loathsome
aspects of the body,
breaks through craving
and unbinds deluded habits.

351
No more need is there to re-form
for those who have reached the goal;
they are free from fear and longing.
The thorns of existence have been removed.

352
A master is one who has let go
of all craving and clinging to the world;
who has seen
the truth beyond forms,
yet is possessed of
a profound knowledge of words.
Such a great being can be said
to have finished the task.

353
I do not declare
another as my teacher
since by myself have I arrived
at the wisdom that overcomes all,
realises all, renounces all.
Wholly liberated am I
from all craving.

354
The gift of truth excels all gifts.
The flavour of reality
surpasses all flavours.
The delight of truth
transcends all delights.
Freedom from craving
is the end of all suffering.

355
Riches mostly ruin the foolish
but not those who seek the beyond.
Just as they dismiss
the well-being of others and cause harm,
fools also ruin themselves.

356
Weeds cause damage in fields.
Lust causes damage to all beings.
Support those who are free from lust;
the gift will yield great benefit.

357
Weeds cause damage in fields.
Hatred causes damage to all beings.
Support those who are free from hatred;
the gift will yield great benefit.

358
Weeds cause damage in fields.
Confusion causes damage to all beings.
Support those who are free from confusion;
the gift will yield great benefit.

359
Weeds cause damage in fields.
Envy causes damage to all beings.
Encourage those who are free from envy
and there will be great benefit.

The Renunciate

360
It is good to restrain the eye.
It is good to restrain the ear.
It is good to restrain the nose.
It is good to restrain the tongue.

361
It is good to be restrained in body.
It is good to be restrained in speech.
It is good to be restrained in the mind.
It is good to be restrained
in everything.
The renunciate who is restrained
in every way will realise freedom
from suffering.

362
One who is rightly disciplined
in all actions,
who is composed,
contented and delights in
solitary contemplation –
such is a renunciate.

363
It is pleasing to hear
the words of a renunciate
who is wise, not inflated,
whose mind is composed
and whose speech is contained
and clear in meaning.

364
One who abides in Dhamma,
who delights in Dhamma,
who contemplates Dhamma,
who memorises Dhamma
does not lose the Way.

365
Bemoaning your own lot
or envying the gains of others
obstructs peace of mind.

366
But, being contented
even with modest gains
pure in livelihood and energetic,
you will be held in high esteem.

367
True renunciates
regard the entire body-mind
without any thought of 'I' or 'mine'
and are devoid of longing
for what they do not have.

368
A renunciate who
abides in loving-kindness
with a heart full of devotion
for the Buddha's teaching
will find peace, stillness and bliss.

369
Bale out the water from your boat;
cut loose from the defiling passions
of lust and hatred;
unencumbered, sail on
towards liberation.

370
One who has
cut off coarse attachments,
cut off subtle attachments,
who cultivates the spiritual faculties,
is the one who finds freedom
from delusion.

371
Be careful!
Do not neglect meditation,
nor allow the mind
to dwell on sensuality
lest you might heedlessly swallow
a red-hot ball of iron
and find yourself crying out,
"why am I suffering?"

372
Concentration does not arise
without understanding,
nor understanding
without concentration.
One who knows both
approaches liberation.

373
A happiness transcending ordinary bliss
is experienced by those renunciates
who have entered into seclusion
with tranquil heart
and clear understanding of the Way.

374
When those who are wise
dwell in contemplation
on the transient nature
of the body-mind,
and of all conditioned existence,
they experience joy and delight
seeing through
to the inherently secure.

375 - 376
This then is the beginning
for a renunciate
who takes up the training:
wisely control your faculties,
commit yourself to the instruction,
seek contentment;
cultivate the company of those
who support your aspiration
for energetic practice of the teachings.
The beauty of pure conduct
conditions whole-hearted well-being
giving rise to complete
freedom from remorse.

377
As old flowers fall
from a jasmine plant
let lust and hatred
fall away.

378
I call them the peaceful ones,
who are calm in body,
in speech and in mind,
and who are thoroughly purged
of all worldly obsessions.

379
Scrutinise yourself.
Examine yourself.
With right attention
to self-assessment
you will live at ease.

380
We are our own protection;
we are indeed our own secure abiding;
how could it be otherwise?
So with due care
we attend to ourselves.

381
A monk, a nun, who cultivates
a joyous disposition
and is filled with
confidence in the Way
will find peace, stillness and bliss.

382
Yet still a youth, a renunciate
fully devoted to the Way
lights up the world
like the moon emerging from clouds.

Great Being

383
Diligently cut off
the stream of craving
and abandon sensual longings;
knowing the limitation
of all that is formed,
realise the uncreated.

384
All chains of bondage fall away
from those who know
and have crossed over
beyond two things.

385
I say a being is great
who stands not on this shore,
nor the other shore,
nor on any shore at all.
Such a being is free from all ties.

386
I say a being is great
who dwells secluded and at ease,
knowing the heart
free from all pollution,
having completed the task
purified of all compulsive tendencies,
and awake.

387
The sun shines by day,
the moon shines by night.
But, both all day and all night
the Buddha shines
in glorious splendour.

388
Having transformed evil
one is called a great being.
Living peacefully
one is called a contemplative.
Having given up impurity
one is called a renunciate.

389
Non-retaliation
is the characteristic of great beings.
They do not give rise to anger.
Should they be attacked,
it is not in their nature to strike back.

390
Suffering subsides to the degree
that you are free from the intention
to cause harm.
There is no real greatness
if there is no restraint from anger.

391
One who refrains from causing harm
by way of body, speech or mind,
can be called a worthy being.

392
Devotion and respect
should be offered to those
who have shown us the Way.

393
One should not be considered
worthy of respect
because of birth or background
or any outer sign;
it is purity
and the realisation of truth
that determine one's worth.

394
Your outer adornments
and pretentious practices
are irrelevant
if inwardly you remain in disarray.

395
To be unconcerned
about outer appearance,
but committed to
intense relentless practice
makes for greatness.

396
No one is noble
merely because of what they inherit.
Nobility comes from cleansing oneself
of all pollutions and attachments.

397
Whoever has broken loose from all bondage
and found fearlessness,
who is beyond attachments
and defilements,
I recognise as a great being.

398
Whoever severs the ties of hatred,
unbinds the ropes of craving,
undoes the locks of wrong view,
opens the doors of ignorance,
and sees truth,
I recognise as a great being.

399
Strength of patience
is the might of noble beings;
they can be shackled,
endure verbal abuse and beatings,
without resorting to anger.

400
Those who are free from anger,
simply disciplined, virtuous,
well-trained,
and have gone beyond rebirth,
these I call great beings.

401
As water slides from a lotus leaf,
so sensual pleasures
do not cling
to a great being.

402
Those who know the freedom
of having laid aside
the burden of attachment
to the body-mind
I call great beings.

403
Those possessed of deep wisdom,
who see what accords with the Way
and what does not,
those who have attained
to the peak of possibility,
I call great beings.

404
Those who are free from attachment
to the company of either householders
or fellow renunciates,
and so wander free from desires
or concern for security of any kind,
are great beings.

405
Those who have renounced
the use of force
in relationship to other beings
whether weak or strong,
who neither kill
nor cause to be killed,
can be called great beings.

406
Those who remain
friendly amid the hostile,
at peace among the aggressive,
and who do not attach themselves
to that upon which others depend
are great beings.

407
For a great being,
lust and ill-will,
arrogance and conceit
drop away
even as a tiny seed would drop
from the tip of a needle.

408
Those who speak truth
and give gentle encouragement,
contending with no-one,
these do I call great beings.

409
The actions of a great being are pure.
Great beings never
knowingly take for themselves
that which belongs to another.

410
The heart of a great being is free.
Great beings no longer pine
for things of this world
or any other world.

411
The heart of a great being is free.
With accurate understanding
which is beyond doubt,
great beings have set their feet firmly
in the land of liberation.

412
Whoever has transcended
all ties of good and bad,
is purified
and free from sorrow,
should be called a great being.

413
Those beings who
are released from all longing
and, like the moon in a cloudless sky,
are pure, clear and serene,
I call great.

414
There are beings
who travel the difficult path
across the dangerous swamp
of defiling passions,
traverse the ocean of delusion
through the darkness of ignorance,
and go beyond.
They are sustained
by wise contemplation,
secure in freedom from doubt,
liberated;
such beings are great indeed.

415
It is a great being
who, having restrained desires
for sensual pleasure,
lives the homeless life
and realises freedom
from both sensual desire
and perpetual becoming.

416
It is a great being
who, having restrained all craving,
lives the homeless life
and realises freedom
from both craving
and perpetual becoming.

417
It is a great being
who can see through all obvious delights
as well as subtle pleasures
to be free from attachment.

418
Those who cease
setting up like against dislike,
who are cooled,
who are not swayed
by worldly conditions –
these I call great beings.

419
I say anyone who understands fully
the passing away and arising of beings,
who remains aware,
non-attached, awake,
who is conscious of
right action at all times,
is a great being.

420
The condition after death
of great beings is indiscernible;
no trace of passion remains.
They are pure.

421
Anyone who lives freed
from habits of clinging,
to past, present or future,
possessing nothing,
is a great being.

422
A great being is fearless like a bull,
noble, strong, wise, diligent,
sees through delusions,
is clear, attentive and awake.

423
To understand all dimensions
of past existence,
to see accurately into all realms,
to reach the end of rebirths,
to know with insight
that which must be known,
to free the heart from ignorance –
this is the essence of great being.

A Note On The Text

A *Dhammapada for Contemplation* is a contemporary rendering of an ancient text; but what of the original Dhammapada? The Buddha lived and taught in India two and a half millennia ago. He wrote nothing, and his teachings were memorised and passed on orally by his earliest followers. An enormous body of material was preserved in this way, although different versions arose in the various Buddhist schools, which flourished in India after the Buddha's *parinibbana*. The collection of verses known as the Dhammapada was composed, probably sometime in the 3rd century BCE, in a language now known as Pali, by members of the 'Theravada', or 'School of the Elders'. We know of three other versions, written down later in other Indian languages, but they survive only partially, or as fragments rescued from archaeological finds, or as translations in Tibetan and Chinese. Those other versions mostly contain the same material, but there are many variations.

What we may think of as 'the' Dhammapada, then, is one version – the shortest and probably the earliest one – of a work with a lively history. It was taken to Sri Lanka later in the 3rd century BCE by the Theravadins, in its original Indian language, and written down

along with the rest of the Pali canon in the 1st century BCE; it comes down to us today as preserved and commented upon by the Theravada tradition. It was the first Buddhist text to be printed in Europe, in 1855, along with a Latin translation, and has been translated into English at least 30 times. It is without doubt the best-known early Buddhist scripture, and to this day Sri Lankan monks will memorise it before their ordinations.

The reason for this popularity is not hard to discover. The Dhammapada is essentially a compilation of sayings, pithy, poetic and direct, that speak to all, not just to monk or nun or scholar. About half of them are found in other parts of the Pali canon, and although they are roughly grouped into chapters sharing a particular theme, most seem to have been chosen for their individual qualities, as sayings and sequences of sayings rich in wisdom to be savoured. Many of the sayings are concerned with ethics, with what is good and foolish and in what each results. Some of these are not, in fact, especially Buddhist, but are found also in other Indian religious texts, such as the great epic, the *Mahabharata*. That is, they belong to a wider tradition of wisdom, of which we have our own versions in the West.

Beyond this basic human wisdom, how-

ever, the sayings of the Dhammapada concern the Way to "freedom from bondage, liberation, true security" (verse 23), which is the particular teaching of the Buddha. They do not present this teaching in the form of doctrine, but instead offer a myriad hints, approaches and directions of investigation, from descriptions of the "great beings" (chapter 23) who have reached the other shore of existence, to compelling comparisons of the paths of "appreciative awareness" and "heedlessness" (verse 21). The appeal of the Dhammapada is greatly enhanced, however, by the similes, metaphors and poetic images lavishly employed to illustrate the meaning of the sayings; for instance, the influence of the wise is described as a light "like that of the moon emerging from clouds" (verse 172). For good measure, the Dhammapada also includes the Buddha's 'Song of Victory', the poem he uttered, it is said, just after he had gained enlightenment (verses 153-4).

The sayings and poems of the Dhammapada were written in verse consisting of four- and six-line stanzas, with lines of eight or eleven syllables. Such forms belong to ancient Indian literary tradition, and lend to the text a distinctive rhythm. This rhythmic constraint necessitated the finding of words of the right number of syllables to fit the lines; the effect of

which is a multiplicity and vigour in the language not found in the prose scriptures. There is therefore a formality in the Pali verse, which, like most poetry, is untranslatable. If we add to this untranslatability the demands of reproducing in English the epigrammatic and suggestive quality of the sayings, it is clear that a formally definitive translation of the Dhammapada is going to be difficult. For this reason, it is necessary to read the text in different translations, comparing the different emphases and resonances found in each, to come to a clear appreciation of the truth offered in each verse.

We could view the sayings of the Dhammapada as photographic negatives, as very old artefacts that miraculously contain within them the profound utterances of the Buddha. Such negatives can be used to make prints, in a modern language like English, which reproduce those ancient sayings. The attempts of scholarly translators to provide strictly objective, formally accurate prints from those old negatives is worthy and necessary, but the objective method does not necessarily transmit all that it was hoped would be captured by the original photographs, those few words of verse. Ajahn Munindo, in his rendering of the text, offers a more personal printing from each negative; one that is designed to transmit, not

the objective meaning of each saying, but something relevant and useful for a person in search of wisdom today.

His method was this: using several respected translations, he ascertained what to his mind was the spirit or essence of each saying. This he did with the aid of the traditional story associated with each verse, which gives an account of the occasion and significance of its utterance. These stories were without doubt composed later than the text itself, and have in general a legendary character like that of the *Jataka* tales, but nevertheless create an ambience, a mythic context, which gives access to an important dimension of what each saying means. Having thus ascertained the spirit of each verse, he sought an expression in contemporary language, which might transmit effectively its spiritual impulse.

Being an ancient Indian text, the Dhammapada abounds in references to monsoons, elephants, jungles, villages, brahmins and so on. While this is wonderfully evocative of life in the Buddha's time, it distracts our attention from the point of the sayings; and therefore Ajahn Munindo's version is, on the whole, rendered into a contemporary idiom relevant to the modern worldview. The *birana* grass that grows fast after monsoon rains, for instance, is

reinterpreted as weeds fed with fertiliser (verse 335), and the Indian ascetic's matted hair, his antelope skin and his lifestyle are rendered as "outer adornments and pretentious practices" (verse 394). Most references to rebirth, and to the hell and heaven realms of Buddhist cosmology, have been replaced by psychological renderings of more relevance today. The references to the wandering mendicant lifestyle of the Buddhist monastic sangha, dependent as it was and is on a village-based agrarian culture, have been modified.

There are other special features of Ajahn Munindo's version. He has not reproduced the gendered language of the original, so that his rendering hopes to address all readers. He has ignored much of the word play that is crucial to the original poetry, but at the benefit of much greater fluidity and naturalness. Although no attempt has been made to reproduce the formal qualities of the original, some of the beauty of the old text's poetry emerges through the freedom enabled by an interpretive rendering (see, for instance, verse 377).

Finally, Ajahn Munindo has noticed a judgemental quality in certain verses of the Dhammapada that was perhaps compelling in its day, but which can now leave us cold, or encourage a wrong effort. For instance, verse

211 literally recommends breaking all ties of intimacy, while Ajahn Munindo's rendering suggests that "if you take sides neither for nor against fondness, there will be no bondage". This kind of change to the tone of the Dhammapada helps us away from an unhelpful judgementalism and towards a consideration of how suffering is brought about in our lives. Ethics might then be better understood as the setting of standards for living that support a life deepened and made rich by contemplation.

Thomas Jones

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